

Town of Shaftsbury Water Board meeting

December 20, 2021

1. Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6 p.m. Present were board members Art Whitman, Tony Krulikowski, Mike Cichanowski, and, via Zoom, Joe Barber. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan.

2. Conflict of interest statement

No conflicts of interest were reported with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

- Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the October 15 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the November 1 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the November 8 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the December 6 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

4. Public comments

There was none.

5. Executive session

Mr. Cichanowski moved to enter executive session at 6:04 p.m. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Cichanowski moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:11 p.m. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Town of Shaftsbury Selectboard Meeting

December 20, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were selectmen Art Whitman (chair), Tony Krulikowski, Mike Cichanowski, and via Zoom, Joe Barber. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

No one reported a conflict of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the Dec. 6 minutes. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

4. Warrants

- Payroll warrant, \$32,246.62. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Check warrant 20, \$82,653.41. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Check warrant 21, \$87,410, for community appropriations approved at March 2021 Town Meeting. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Check warrant 17A, \$1736.76, for overpayment of property taxes. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Payroll #12, adjusted, \$316.74 (a credit for a check paid incorrectly). Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

5. Announcements

Mr. Whitman had asked Representative Dave Durfee to speak to the legislature's plans re in-person Town Meetings. Mr. Durfee said the legislature would have to pass a law to permit municipalities to hold Town Meeting via Australian ballot and/or to postpone the meeting. He said it might take about two weeks for the legislature to act and the Governor to sign. Should the legislature so act, Shaftsbury could direct the State to act as above, and to mail out a ballot to everyone. Mr. Whitman asked for public input. The school has offered its facilities for Town Meeting, or the town could meet in the Town Garage. He noted that any decision would have to be made in time to have the ballot sent to the printer by the last week of January. Mr. Durfee noted that last year the Town held an informational meeting on Town Meeting evening via Zoom (but no voting would be allowed).

6. Public Comments

There were none.

7. Treasurers report

Ms. Dexter reported that a lot of income had come in from cemeteries, and about \$30,000 in delinquent taxes. Delinquent taxes receipts are about average for this time of year. The town clerk's office took in more than \$8000, mostly in recording fees. About half of those fees went to the document "restoration" account.

As for the reserve funds, a large amount of water payments came through.

Ms. Dexter noted that the final report from the professional auditors has been received and shared with the Select Board.

9. Community Appropriations

Mr. Whitman reported that organizations requesting an increase in their appropriations or making a first-time request were asked to present their cases.

Ms. XXX, a retired teacher from the area, secured the necessary petition signatures to add the Bennington Senior Center to the appropriations list. She said the Center offers activities every week day, and larger events. Center customers keep track of fellow customers should they be absent, or have problems. She said she is concerned that the Center might begin to charge non-Benningtonians for memberships, and thought that a contribution of \$750 from Shaftsbury might help forestall that possibility.

Nicole Campbell of Shires Kids presented a request for an increase from \$500 to \$750. She explained the book program, which sends enrolled children a book monthly until their fifth birthday, free. The cost to Shires Kids is \$25-\$26/year per child. Shaftsbury enrollment went from 40 to 55 in

2021, hence their request for a larger contribution. She said the latest census data reports that 171 children under five live in Shaftsbury. The goal of the program is to increase literacy and the love of reading in young children. If every Shaftsbury child under five enrolled the cost to Shires Kids would be more than \$4000. She described how kids are enrolled by outreach on the part of pediatric care givers and others.

Chloe Viner Collins presented a request on the part of the Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless for an increase from \$1000 to \$5000. She gave an overview of the shelters they manage and the services they offer. Their two shelters are full at present. Drop in services are available. Additionally, one hundred sixty six homeless people are now housed in motels in the area. Their shelters are the only ones in the county. The state's motel voucher program will end this spring. Bennington contributes about \$32,000 annually. Most towns contribute \$1000-\$3000.

Mr. Whitman said the policy regarding community appropriations is unclear. This will be a project for the next year.

Mr. Kiernan said community appropriations would total nearly 2.25 cents/\$100,000 on each tax bill, if every request were approved. Mr. Kiernan said the VLCT recommendation is that any increase be accompanied by a petition, and that each organization submit an appropriation petition every three years.

Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve all community appropriations presented for FY 23. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion. Mr. Cichanowski recommended approving the requests and tightening up the policy regarding appropriations in the meantime. Jenny Rozycki of the McCollough Library said their request for an increase was intended to put them in the black, when they'd been dipping into their endowment principal for years. Mr. Whitman noted that voting "yes" does not afford citizens with the sort of tax deduction they might get if they gave a donation. The motion passed 4-0-0.

11. Budget

Joe Vadakin from the Fire Department presented their request. He said the budget is generally overall the same as last year. He asked that the Select Board add to the budget an ATV with a trailer, to help manage challenging terrain in town and in Glastenbury. The line item would stay the same. The cost would be \$15-\$16,000. Mr. Vadakin doesn't want to raise taxes for it. He would like to purchase it in mid-FY 23. It is something the department has wanted for years but always put on the back burner. The board agreed that the decision should be the Fire Department's. Mr. Vadakin said they'd welcomed two new volunteers recently.

Mr. Kiernan summarized the budget and its attempt to retain town employees, to streamline the listers office, to rebuild the website (taking advantage of the skills of the current cemetery superintendent), and to eliminate the veterans memorial contribution (the balance is healthy), among other items. The tax bill would total \$22/\$100,000 valuation. He asked that t because he is unable to present the budget to the public (for technical reasons) this evening, the vote should be postponed to January 17 when he will next be present.

11. DPW Report

Shaftsbury Hollow culvert bid. (The culvert is collapsing.) Mr. Kiernan reported that Mr. Yannotti reviewed the bid opened on December 6 and recommends accepting the bid by Weaver Excavating. Mr. Krulikowski moved to award the contract to Weaver Excavating. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0. The Town's share of the cost would be 20%.

14. Cemetery contract

Mr. Kiernan reported that the cemetery maintenance and mowing bid by Sycamore Landscaping was approved by the cemetery committee at their last meeting. Mr. Krulikowski moved to award the

\$31,200 yearly contract (with a two-year extension provision) to Sycamore Landscaping. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

15. Errors and omissions

Three errors and omissions request from the listers office were reviewed. Mr. Kiernan described them. Mr. Krulikowski moved to accept the request. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

16. Removal of listers office

Mr. Kiernan reminded viewers that a proposal to eliminate the listers office and move to a professional assessor with assessor's clerk arrangement instead will be placed on the Town Meeting ballot.

17. Board positions

Mr. Kiernan reminded all that two Select Board terms are expiring; there is a listers vacancy (the proposal to eliminate that office is complicating); an opening among the Trustees of Public Funds; and openings on the Development Review Board and Planning Commission. Those seeking to be elected must submit petitions no later than mid-January.

18. Other business

There was none.

19. Review of Action Items

There were none.

20. Adjournment

Mr. Krulikowski moved to adjourn at 7:54 p.m. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.